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NEWSLETTER

Professional legal information, services, and education

A Brief History of Hamilton County's Various Courthouses

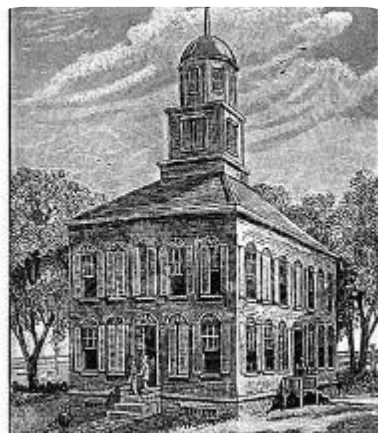
By Jason Alexander, Manager of Central Services Division-Hamilton County Clerk of Courts

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The year of our first permanent courthouse is unclear. Conflicting sources state that it was either built the year of Hamilton County's founding, 1790 or in 1795. Being that Hamilton County was established in 1790 and having it on record numerous times that there were rooms rented in taverns for the courts' use, it is logical to presume that the first permanent courthouse structure was likely built in 1795.

The structure was a simple log cabin built by volunteers thereby costing the county virtually nothing. Sources agree on the descrip-



tion of the terrain and topography of its location. It was virtually swamp land, marshes, and of course the much talked about frog pond. A quote taken from a 1921 publication from the Bench and Bar of Cincinnati titled "History of Hamilton County Court Houses" has the following: "Indeed, historical writers upon the old court-

house declare that judicial business was transacted to music furnished by bull frogs."

The second courthouse was constructed in 1802. This was due in large part to the rapid growth of Cincinnati as it was becoming Ohio's most important trading center. At a cost of \$3,000, this was Hamilton County's first judicial structure that was constructed of bricks into a two-story limestone building. In 1813, this courthouse was ultimately a victim of fire as this structure served as a military barracks for soldiers during the war of 1812.

Hamilton County's third courthouse was not completed until 1819 and was built on the site of our present courthouse, Court and Main Streets. The county commissioners accepted a lot offered by Jess Hunt, grandfather of noted attorney Elliot Pendleton Hunt. At that time, this location was far removed from the then village of Cincinnati. The total construction cost was \$15,000. This structure very much reflected the design of the prior courthouse and was an example of Federal style architecture.

It is clear that some citizens were not pleased at the appearance nor the location of this court-

house. The third courthouse, in what would become a historical trend for Hamilton County, would also burn to the ground in 1849.

This fire was the result of a fire in an adjacent pork factory. A witness to the event in 1891 recalled the following: "The fire had been communicated to it by a neighboring pork-house conflagration on a warm summer's day. It caught on its exposed timber roof and cupola, and soon roof, dome, cupola, spire and steeple were enveloped in flames." The witness goes on to say that "The cupola had been a long-time home for the pigeons of the city. The old courthouse, it seems was the home of the pigeons as well as the judges and the lawyers. It was a great old courthouse and had a great history in its eventful days. Sorry to part with it."

Interestingly, while awaiting the construction of Hamilton County's now fourth courthouse, it would be none other than a pork packing house in which the courts and county offices would find their temporary quarters. In 1852, enough of the new building was complete to allow the courts and county offices to start moving in. At the time, Cincinnati had many such facilities and had acquired the nickname of "Porkopolis."

Our fourth courthouse, coined by some as the "finest building in the West" was not completed until 1862. A well-known architect by the name of Isaiah Rogers was commissioned to design this new courthouse. At the time he had also recently completed the design of the "Burnett House" in Cincinnati which was then the largest hotel in the Midwest.

At a total cost of \$695,253.29, they utilized more fireproof materials such as limestone, marble, and steel. This courthouse has been described as a temple-like Greek Revival style structure with features of a balustrade portico that was complemented with six massive Corinthian columns.

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Iron steps that led to the second and main floor would bring one into the rotunda room. This room also served as the main criminal court room. On March 28, 1884 riots broke out in Cincinnati over the verdict which had been rendered on a murder trial involving a livery stable owner who had been killed by two employees. The trial of the first defendant ended in a verdict of guilty of manslaughter and a sentence of 20 years imprisonment. After viewing pictures subsequent to the 1884 riot, I believe that it was in this "rotunda room" in which the infamous verdict which was the tinderbox for the incitement of the mob on that tragic night of March 29th.

This incident resulted in the Ohio National Guard being deployed with a Gatling gun in an attempt to restore order. After three days and nights order was finally restored and the end result would be 56 dead and over 300 persons injured.

It was not just the official court records and county records that were lost at that time, the Law Library was considered to be the finest and largest law library in the country and all of its nearly 17,000 volumes perished in the fire. It is said that due to the generosity of local attorneys and around the world, the library was able to rebuild its collection within ten years.

The fifth courthouse was built in 1887. It was a most arduous task to recover from the fire and build this fifth structure. The groundwork for this was in the State Legislature passing a bill creating a board of trustees which were appointed by Governor George Hoadley to oversee the construction. Architect James W. McLaughlin was employed to design this new structure. Unfortunately, this courthouse was built to nearly the same dimensions as its predecessor which meant that it didn't take long for the size of the city to outpace the size of this courthouse. To that end, this courthouse would outlive its use in serving the city in a very short amount of time.

On January 13th 1911, Judge Stanley Struble who was then a member of the Board of County Commissioners, introduced a resolution proclaiming a greater project to be implemented of not only building a new jail, but the erection of a new courthouse as well, or in lieu of that, to enlarge the existing structure. On October 1, 1915, it would be none other than former President and future Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, William Howard Taft that would do us the honor of laying the cornerstone.

In closing, on October 18th 1919, the sixth and still standing Hamilton County Courthouse was officially dedicated. On the day of the dedication, Senator Warren G. Harding who would go on to serve as our 29th President of the United States was on hand to deliver an address. In contrast to all of its predecessors, 100 years later, on October 18th 2019, this bastion of Hamilton County would still be in existence to celebrate its centennial anniversary. There were many dignitaries on hand to commemorate this event. In addition to Governor Mike DeWine paying homage to Harding's original speech, this commemoration would be fortunate enough to have in attendance Dr. Warren G. Harding III whose grandfather's brother was President Harding.

Jason Alexander is currently the Manager of the Central Services Division for the Hamilton County Clerk of Courts. Within that division is the Archive and Preservation Department which has recently made very surprising and important discoveries in terms of the courts' historical records, namely records that survived the 1884 Courthouse Riot and fire. In addition to running the Central Services



Division, Jason also is the Secretary of the Hamilton County Records Commission and serves on the board of the "Friends of the Taft Legacy."

Historical Local Resources

Law Library subscribers have access to a variety of Cincinnati Resources, including those listed below. If you have questions about these resources, contact the reference staff at reference@cms.hamilton-co.org or 513.946.5300.

CATALOG

The Bicentennial guide to greater Cincinnati : a portrait of two hundred

Location: Text Room

Call Number: F499.C53 G54 1988

The Cincinnati Courthouse Riot / Steven J. Rolfes.

Location: Main Room Treatises

Call Number: F499.C557 R65 2016

The Cincinnati riot: its causes and results. [By] J.S. Tunison.

Author: Tunison, Joseph S.

Location: Text Room

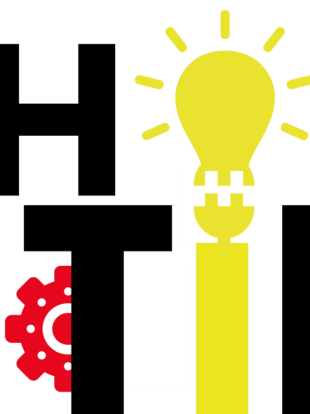
Call Number: HV6483.C5 T8

Greater Cincinnati and its people : a history / editor-in-chief Lewis Alexander Leonard ; staff historian Will L. Clark.

Location: Text Room

Call Number: F499.C5 L5 1927

TECH TIP



Register for Self–Study CLE or an Upcoming CLE

By Ana Mendoza

Did you know that you can watch pre-recorded CLES hosted by the Hamilton County Law Library? The Law Library offers a large selection of topics at no extra cost for subscribers. You can also sign up for upcoming CLES through our [website](#).

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Subscriber Login

Visit the Law Library website and click the top right button “Subscriber Login” to get started.

HINT: Your **Username** is your last name then first name with no spaces between the names. (**lastnamefirstname**)

Your **password** is your **borrower number**. Contact the library staff to obtain this number if you do not know it. (513-946-5300)

You may [change your password](#) to login to the website but this will not change your password to login to Lexis Overdrive or the computers at the law library.

Username

Please enter username

Password

Please enter password

Your Username is your last name and first name with no spaces. Unless you have changed your password, it will be the barcode assigned to you at subscription registration. If you have forgotten your password, or have difficulties logging in, please contact the Reference desk to recover your information.

Remote Access Databases

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Calendar

On-Demand Library

Once you’ve signed in, click on the drop down menu under CLE Classes and select the On-Demand Library to view the available videos.

To register for a class, click “Calendar” and proceed to register for the upcoming CLE.

CLE Self-Study Shop

Self-Study CLEs are FREE to HC Law Library Subscribers. Login to our website for access.

Subscribers **CLICK HERE** to get started!

Howdy, Ana Mendoza | [Logout](#)

Self-Study courses are \$50.00 each for non-subscribers.

See below for descriptions of courses.

As a subscriber, register for classes by clicking the link on the left and choose a CLE from the list. There are brief descriptions of each CLE in the left column.

Managing Stress For Competent Client Representation

(Original date December 29, 2022)

2.5 attorney professional conduct CLE in Ohio

[Click here to get started!](#)

Attorney Tabitha Hochscheid explains how self-care is important for lawyers in order to best represent client issues and demonstrate competence in accordance with the Ohio Ethics Rules.

Working on Your Gender Based Violence Case Part 3

(Original date November 17, 2022)

1.5 hour of general CLE in Ohio

[Click here to get started!](#)

Danielle Firsich, Manager of Non-Residential Domestic Violence Services at YWCA Greater Cincinnati, will be teaching about gender based violence.

Working on Your Gender Based Violence Case Part 2

(Original date November 3, 2022)

1.5 hour of general CLE in Ohio

[Click here to get started!](#)

Danielle Firsich, Manager of Non-Residential Domestic Violence Services at YWCA Greater Cincinnati, will be teaching about gender based violence.

Working on Your Gender Based Violence Case Part 1

(Original date October 22, 2022)

1.5 hour of general CLE in Ohio

[Click here to get started!](#)

Danielle Firsich, Manager of Non-Residential Domestic Violence Services at YWCA Greater Cincinnati, will be teaching about gender based violence.

Once you have selected a CLE, you will be redirected to the first video with links to corresponding documents.

Check back occasionally for updates to the CLE On-Demand Library for other credit opportunities!

You can also check out the [Calendar](#) for upcoming CLEs and register for the "Live" Zoom CLE.

CLEs COMING SOON for credit

Introduction to immigration & Citizenship Policy (original date 2/15/2023)

Attorney and Educator Mary Joan Reutter will present an overview of immigration and citizenship policy, including the Immigration and Nationality Act, Californian Prop 187 & IIRAJRA (Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act), as well as TANF, citizenship, and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

1.0 hour of general CLE credit in Ohio

Introduction to Education Law in the Immigration Arena (original date 3/22/2023)

Attorney and Educator Mary Joan Reutter will be discussing adult education: work, family literacy and citizenship, with a focus on the medical disability waiver and its implications for education and learning, including funding for providers, as well as topics such as: WIOA Workforce Innovation Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and citizenship testing.

1.0 hour of general CLE credit in Ohio

Handling Problem Probates (original date 5/23/2023)

Attorney Mark Basil explains how to handle problem probate cases.

1.0 hour of general CLE credit in Ohio

What is the keyword at the end of the segment one video? *

At the end of each video, a keyword will be displayed. Type in the keyword to move on to the next section of the video.

Subscriber Benefits

All subscribers have access to the following valuable resources and services:

Circulation privileges to borrow from over 40,000 print volumes for up to six weeks at a time

Access to extensive legal information databases from the Law Library, including

Lexis+, Westlaw, Wolters Kluwer VitalLaw™, Overdrive e-books, HeinOnline, and Loislaw treatises

Wireless network throughout the Law Library

Zoom, Skype & other videoconferencing

Eight meeting rooms with speaker phones

Professional reference service by our law librarians, available via e-mail, telephone, and in person

Free document delivery by fax or e-mail of print and electronic materials

CLE seminars throughout the year on legal research and substantive topics

Subscribers' lounge, magazines, daily newspapers, and coffee

Bi-weekly news alerts by practice area

Discounted rates for photocopying

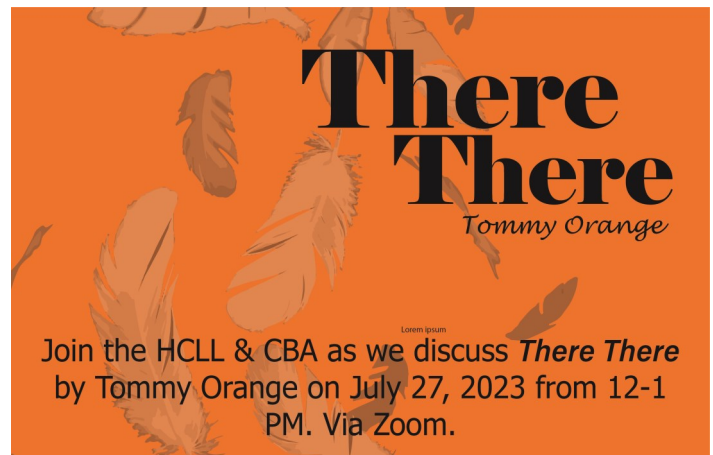
In addition, solos and attorneys whose firm has a subscription have 24 hour remote access to Fastcase.com case law, Aspen/LOISLaw treatises, HeinOnline (for under 50 attorney firms), EBSCOhost, and Wolters Kluwer VitalLaw™

UPCOMING EVENTS

07/04/2023—CLOSED for Independence Day

07/13/2023— Hamilton County Law Library Resources Board Meeting – at 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

07/27/2023— HCLL Book Club Meeting – at 12:00 PM – 1:00 PM



Not Renewing with the CBA?

If you are interested in continuing your subscription with the Hamilton County Law Library, please contact the Law Library to change your membership from the CBA Bundle to a regular yearly membership. Depending on the size of the firm, the subscription cost may vary. Visit the [Benefits](#) page at the Law Library for more information about pricing and library services.

Contact us:

Email: Reference@cms.hamilton-co.org

Phone: (513) 946-5300

Law Library Board Meeting

The Hamilton County Law Library Resources Board will hold its next regular quarterly meeting on Thursday, July 13, 2023 at 12:00pm in the Law Library's boardroom, Hamilton County Courthouse, 1000 Main St., Sixth floor, Cincinnati, OH 45202. Meetings are open to the public.

Don't Forget: Ohio Jury Instructions, Page's Ohio Revised Code Annotated (and many other titles) are available online, from your home or office with your Law Library subscription!

As part of your subscription to the Law Library, you have access to ebooks on a wide range of legal topics. There are titles from LexisNexis, West Academic and the American Bar Association which you can access and read with ease from your home or office, via the website or app.

Many of our Lexis titles are available for **unlimited use**. This means that you won't have to wait for a title if another patron is using it.

Two notable titles on this platform are **Ohio Jury Instructions** and **Page's Ohio Revised Code Annotated**. You can search entire sets or a particular volume by phrase or keyword and access the jury instruction or statute and all of the summary Notes to Decisions.

Other popular titles available in the digital library include:

- Anderson's Ohio Criminal Practice and Procedure
- Ohio Evidence Courtroom Manual
- Weissenberger's Ohio Civil Procedure Litigation Manual
- Anderson's Ohio Civil Rules Practice with Forms
- Weissenberger's Ohio Evidence Treatise
- Weissenberger's Federal Evidence Courtroom Manual

To get started, simply log in to our website and follow the link to Overdrive (Lexis Digital Library) from the Remote Access Databases page. For more detailed information about getting on and finding what you need, see Ana's Tech Tip from our [April newsletter](#). And feel free to call or email us with any questions! 513-946-5300 or reference@cms.hamilton-co.org.

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